

# AROUND TOWN



## Citizen shake up

### Globalisation has global effects on individuals.

By Sarah Gehrke

Globalisation is a big word. It encompasses increasing transnational interconnectivity in pretty much every sphere of public life, including the economic, political, social, cultural and ecological. Ever since the term was invented, in fact, it's been happily thrown about in nearly every discussion that goes beyond the question of who's gonna buy the milk.

One of the core features of the debate is the question of how it affects citizenship. It is a popular notion that globalisation processes diminish the role of the nation state—not only regarding political sovereignty, but also when it comes to people's loyalties. The recent discussion of dual nationalities, sparked by Geert Wilders, has shown that the loyalty issue continues to be a source of sleepless nights for many.

When Wilders suggested that PvdA state secretaries Ahmed Aboutaleb and Nebahat Albayrak give up their Moroccan and Turkish passports respectively and that, generally, members of the government shouldn't be allowed to have dual nationality, he implied that having two passports means having two minds when it comes to making political decisions. Although one wonders if it wouldn't have

Wouldn't 12 balls solve the whole problem?

been easier for Wilders to take Albayrak to a Turkey-Holland football match to see which team she cheers on, his suggestion attracted serious consideration. Support came from SP leader Jan Marijnissen, whose statement, though rather vague in an attempt to stay amiable, nevertheless made clear that he, too, would prefer seeing government functionaries having only one nationality (model function and all, you know).

Discussions like this illustrate the fact that questions of nationality and citizenship remain of great importance, despite—or maybe because of—globalisation processes. In fact, the recent outbreaks of nationalism all over Europe could well be seen as a result of ever-increasing European integration. And calls for the cultural integration of immigrants are not exactly a sign that the end of the nation state is near. In the face of the hardened integration tests in the Netherlands—which include questions on Dutch society, culture and history—who would still speak of the concept of national citizenship losing importance?

So what exactly are the effects of globalisation on the nation state? In her lecture 'Shaking Up Citizenship', held last Friday and organised by the VU, VPRO and Felix Meritis, Saskia Sassen offered her interpretation of the issue. Sassen, a Dutch-American sociologist and professor at the University of Chicago, the London School of Economics and the VU, is one of the leading theorists on globalisation. She argues that, contrary to popular opinion, globalisation does not mean an undermining of the nation state—it rather causes a

re-organisation of it. The belief that globalisation is something happening outside of, and opposed to, nation states is, according to Sassen, a misconception. It does, however, have its effect on the distribution of powers within those states.

Sassen's theory, which she elaborates on in her recently published book *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, comprises the idea that globalisation leads to a de-balancing of the *trias politica* or separation of powers. More and more power is attributed to the executive, because that is the part of government that aligns itself with global actors. Meanwhile, the position of the legislative weakens. This, in Sassen's argument, directly leads to citizens losing an increasing number of rights. Examples include loss of bankruptcy protection when it comes to credit card debt, and the slackening of privacy rights which results from the many data retention laws issued in the wake of the fight against terrorism. 'It is necessary,' Sassen maintains, 'that we, as citizens, recognise the vulnerability of our citizenship. We fool ourselves if we think we're protected by the state.' (And apparently she gets death threats for saying things like that.)

Furthermore, according to Sassen, the nation state as formal political apparatus nowadays captures less and less of 'the Political'—that is, the direct political and economic concerns of its citizens. Returning to the issue of citizens' loyalty to their state, one question remains: if everyone wants us to be loyal citizens, on what grounds should we want to be? 'The state,' Sassen says, 'has to be about the citizens. We, as individuals, need to reposition ourselves. We need to be recharged with power.'

How we do that, she leaves up to our own imagination. But always remember kids: ask not what you can do for your state. Ask what your state can do for you. **W**

## City soft spots

### Wanted: Temporary Experimental Sleeping Space.

By Angelique van Engelen

Joop de Boer, a 29-year-old, part-time city planner, and Jeroen Beekmans, a 21-year-old political science student, aren't architects, but they have a passion for buildings. They are the team behind Studio Golfstromen, a bureau that creates what they call 'soft architecture'. That means they don't construct buildings; instead, their mission is to create experiences in vacated offices, in residential blocks about to be knocked down, in abandoned factories, under bridges and in low-key courtyards. 'Everybody wants buzz,' say the owners. 'So we create it.'

De Boer and Beekmans have been throwing each other ideas about city living for years now, since the days when they shared a student house in Amsterdam and together developed an obsession for invigorating city life. The decision to start a company was made only after De Boer moved out—the two realised that they had been sitting on truly viable ideas which centred on vacant buildings. They decided to make a go of it: Golfstromen began a year ago, and now they work two days a week at the studio, combining a consistent and professional approach with 'sheer lunacy'.

An *antikraak* organisation they are not. 'There are enough of those around,'

Softening the city with soft beds.



declares Beekmans. Instead, Golfstromen tries to work with company owners and the public sector—those who want to create a positive buzz around their vacant premises. 'We simply borrow. We don't squat or prevent squatting. But we make the most out of a building for a short space of time by evolving the ideas that are inherent to the space,' explains De Boer.

So, do they see themselves as gentrified squatters? They laugh: 'We create experiences in the city, that's all,' says Beekmans. But they do believe that today's hype is all about being there for the experience and their job is to keep ahead of the next big cultural phenomenon. 'Checking out what's going on is a matter of sensing,' De Boer says.

What's the thinking behind the company name? 'Gulf streams in the ocean can be short and long term,' says De Boer. 'Our activities are also part of fluid developments, revolving around existing themes.'

Golfstromen's first success was Jazz met Ballen at Sugar Factory last summer. Together with the band Quincey, they organised an experimental musical translation of the final match of the World Cup in the Sugar Factory. The interbreeding of live football with live jazz proved to be such fun that they might repeat it again, perhaps when the Dutch team is playing during the Europe Cup.

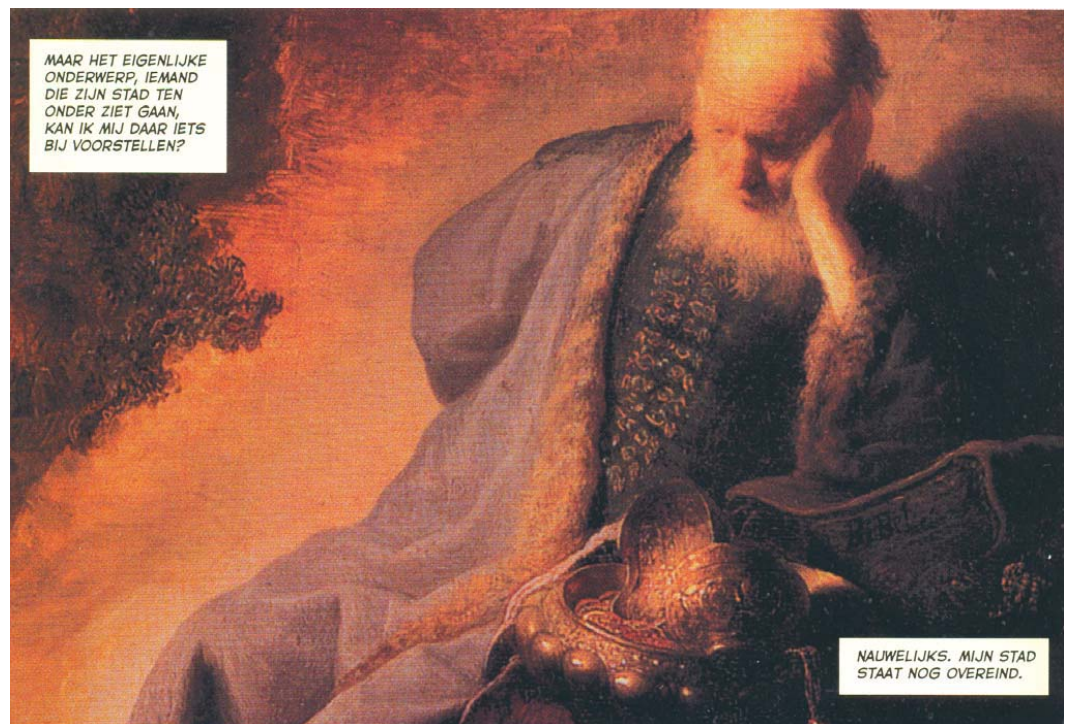
This event caught the attention of Buma Cultuur, the organisation behind the Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE), and now De Boer and Beekmans are hard at work developing the concept of creative sleeping spaces.

For the next instalment of ADE, Golfstromen will be drawing on Buma's support to create the city's first indoor campsite. If all works out the way they anticipate, the temporary site will also be the launch of their 'reconstruction hotel'—the original idea behind Studio Golfstromen's inception.

Golfstromen try to be a bridge between Amsterdam's underground, the adventure seekers and the people with property. 'We create possibilities,' says De Boer. 'We want to run a website listing temporary sleeping spaces in empty buildings throughout town. It would entice adventurous tourists. We'll price it below the budget hotels and get people to the weirdest places.'

This sort of underground is already quite vibrant in Amsterdam, but the rules are ridiculously restrictive, De Boer complains: 'That needs to change—everybody is doing things and throwing around ideas which concern the "soft city", meaning life and experiences, living life to the max. We are simply trying to put ideas into practice. But Amsterdam is a tough environment compared to other cities.'

Studio Golfstromen deliberately has no office: De Boer and Beekmans work from cafés and bars around town, because these offer perfect settings for getting direct inspiration for their mission. Plus, being out and about, they can track down great buildings all the time. De Boer believes that sites which are being used in ways different from their



MAAR HET EIGENLIJKE  
ONDERWERP, IEMAND  
DIE ZIJN STAD TEN  
ONDER ZIET GAAN,  
KAN IK MIJ DAAR IETS  
BIJ VOORSTELLEN?

NALWELIJKS. MIJN STAD  
STAAT NOG OVEREIND.

original intentions offer huge adventure potential—and this is what they conceptualise to the max.

Devising the plans for rethinking sites demands cunning, strategy and vigour. For the ADE event, for example, they need a place that is at once empty, inspiring and creative, but can also host 100 to 250 sleeping mats or hammocks. On their list for consideration so far is an abandoned office building, the former Shell tower Overhoeks, and a few residential blocks in line for demolition.

With 60,000 people visiting last year's ADE—the biggest club event in the world—Beekmans and De Boer have got their work cut out for them. They need to create something that will make sleeping an imaginative experience. 'It's got to be fun,' says Beekmans. 'To experience the ordinary in new ways is what people want more than anything else.'

[www.golfstromen.nl](http://www.golfstromen.nl)

## Drowned world

### Talking Apocalypse Soon with graphic novelist Guido van Driel.

By Luuk van Huêt

With scientific evidence piling up to show the dire future in store for Planet Earth in the face of global warming, the naysayers who pooh-pooh the whole phenomenon by quoting bogus scientists while brandishing hand-picked weather reports are

an unfortunate side effect.

However, the acclaimed Amsterdam-based graphic novelist Guido van Driel was partly inspired in writing and illustrating his new work by these grave portents: in *De Ondergang van Amsterdam*, our fair city meets its demise in a watery Armageddon.

As Van Driel explains: 'The story revolves around Titus, a young, black, illegal immigrant who's staying at a home he's contracted to renovate. One night, his colleague tells him he's convinced Amsterdam will be flooded by the sea because of global warming. They go to the Rijksmuseum and there, Titus is confronted with a work by Rembrandt called "Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem". Titus is entranced by the painting, but is unable to picture the suffering that would accompany seeing your home being destroyed. Later that night, he ventures forth into the city again while pondering this, and his travels become more and more surreal, culminating in the destruction of Amsterdam by the rising waters.'

Van Driel's comic book career is a story worth telling in itself, as it concerns a qualified historian ending up writing and drawing what he loves best. 'During my studies, I used to draw cartoons all the time,' he says. 'When I approached the *UvA* magazine *Folia*, they took me on as an illustrator. Then I reasoned: if I can get assignments at a couple of other magazines, I can make a living! One thing led to another and I came into contact with the publisher Oog&Blik, where they looked at my work and told me to go and make a comic. So I made *Vis aan de Wand*, and it received a Stripsschapprijns in 1995. I've been busy ever since.'

After *Vis aan de Wand*, Van Driel was lauded for his later works, including *Mijnheer Servelaat neemt Vakantie*, *De*

*Jeremiah Lamenting the Loss of Mookum*.

*Fijnproever* and *Om Mekaar in Dokkum*.

From *An Inconvenient Truth* to Berlin's cute polar bear Knut, global warming is on everyone's lips right now. However, Van Driel points out that *De Ondergang van Amsterdam* predates the current environmentally minded fascination: 'I've worked on the book on and off for a couple of years. I actually drew the first scenes in 1998. I was interested in doing an apocalyptic story concerning Amsterdam for a long time, and I've also been convinced that our consumer society would soon reach its boundaries and suffer a backlash because of it. Although the work is motivated by my concern for these issues, it's not meant as just a warning.'

During his post-academic career as a cartoonist and illustrator, Van Driel also took up painting, something which has become a noticeable aspect of his work. Van Driel paints his comics using acrylic paint on black paper, sometimes using multiple layers to add depth to the pictures. Regarding the profound influence of the Old Masters on *De Ondergang van Amsterdam*, Van Driel notes: 'I get inspired by contemporary American authors like Chris Ware and Daniel Clowes, but also by painters like Picasso and the Old Masters. In fact, *De Ondergang van Amsterdam* itself was a result of an assignment by *Vrij Nederland* to make a comic about Rembrandtjaar. I had this story lying around that just missed something to tie it all together, and then I suddenly thought of incorporating Rembrandt into it. That worked!'

*De ondergang van Amsterdam* by Guido van Driel is published by Uitgeverij Oog & Blik/De Harmonie.